FES
Youth Leadership Development Programme (YLDP)

Module
"Conflict Management"

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**Organized by**

FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG

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Training Approach

This participatory and process-oriented training consist of theoretical inputs as well as practical exercises and role-plays, depending on participants' inputs and overall dynamics of the workshop.

It is comprised of three interconnected elements:
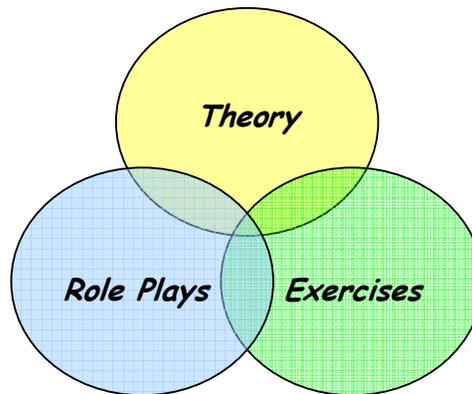
Theory

- ➢ Short presentations by the trainers
- ➢ Brief and simple handouts
- ➢ Background information on conflict management and mediation

Exercises

- ➢ Help to translate knowledge directly from theory into practice
- ➢ Support, improve and accelerate learning processes
- ➢ Facilitates feedback on usefulness of tools and models used

Role Plays

- ➢ Intensify and deepen learning experiences
- ➢ Show where skills have already been developed and where they could be improved
- ➢ Reveal aspects of specific conflict situations, which might remain hidden or can be underestimated in a theoretical analysis of the situation
- ➢ Equips the participants to deal with conflicting situations from various points of view
- ➢ Provide a safe and supportive environment for making 'mistakes'

The training focuses on the following three aspects of learning and personal/professional development:

Availability of useful
Methods & Tools

Trained & Developed
Skills & Knowledge

Positive
**Inner
Attitude**
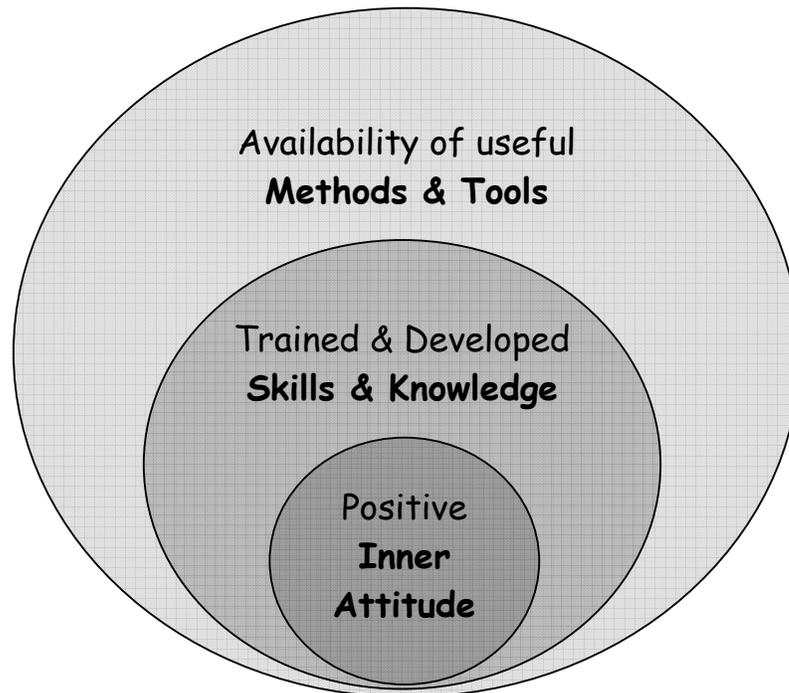
You don't necessarily need to study and work in the field of conflict resolution for years, to become a good mediator or conflict resolution practitioner. Some people are doing a brilliant job quite naturally. They have what one can call a 'good heart, open mind and well connected spirit'. They are generally interested in other people's opinions and want to know how the world looks like from other people's perspective, because they know that everybody perceives the world through his/her own lenses and that everybody somehow lives in his/her own 'reality'. It also means that these people have nearly any prejudices (or that they are at least pretty conscious about their existing prejudices and know how to deal with them), and they also believe in finding solutions, even though solutions may not be visible at the beginning or during the process.

Any available methods or tools that one even applies in a very skilled and knowledgeable manner will have little chance of success, or may even turn into the opposite, if done without a positive and supportive attitude.

> *"Violence is not an action, but a motivation or an attitude itself. Sometimes a smile can be very violent."*
>
> *XIV. Dalai Lama*

What is Conflict ?

Conflict, like change, will always occur given the dynamics of human interactions.

It will occur between family members, workers, colleagues, supervisors, boards of management in our work or play environments, between organizations and within organizations. Why is this? Because we all have different interests, goals, perceptions, viewpoints, values and experiences.

The paradox of conflict is that it is both the force that can tear relationships apart and the force that binds them together, meaning that they can be either healthy (constructive) or unhealthy (destructive). This dual nature of conflict makes it an important concept to study and understand.

Eastern philosophies talk about "Yin & Yang", representing two dualities:

Yang – Characteristics	*Yin - Characteristics*
Serving, Protecting, Active	*Leading, Inspiring, Passive,*
Giving impulses, Exploring	*Space providing, Nourishing*
Goal-orientated (outward)	*Process-orientated (inward)*
Male - Light - Day - Sun - Hot -	*Female - Dark - Night - Moon - Cold –*
Dry - Hard - Up – Out - …	*Wet - Soft - Down - In - …*

These philosophies teach us that one must not judge, and that we have to be creative in finding appropriate ways to integrate what appears to be a contradiction. If we are successful, we will transform existing conflicts and create something new and more beautiful.

It is normal for people to live and work well together to have conflicts from time to time.

We disagree with each other because we each see the world differently, and we have different ideas about what we want and how to do things. Our individual and collective backgrounds and experiences, e.g. in cultural, spiritual, political and economical aspects, are different.

Each and every one of us has a very different and unique personality.
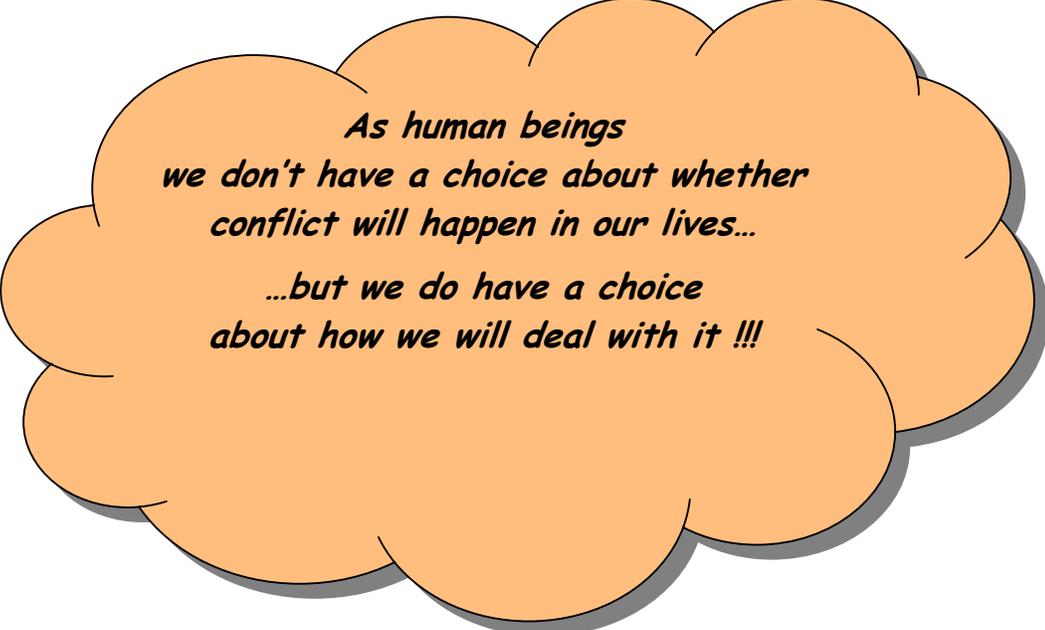
As human beings
we don't have a choice about whether
conflict will happen in our lives…

…but we do have a choice
about how we will deal with it !!!

Five Basic Styles in Conflict Situations

Competition   **→ WIN / LOSE**

Giving In / Accomodating
→ LOSE / WIN

"I satisfy my needs at your expense."
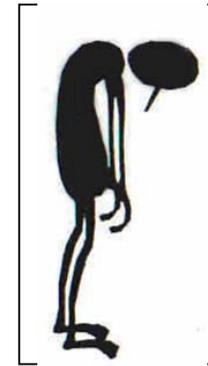
"I satisfy your needs at my expense."

Compromise
→ BOTH WIN A BIT / BOTH LOSE A BIT
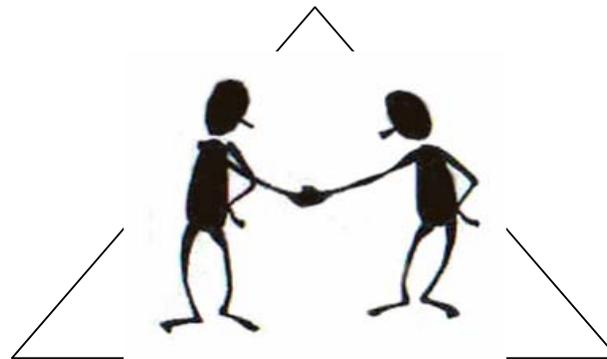
Avoidance
→ LOSE / LOSE

Co-operation
→ WIN / WIN

"Neither you nor I satisfy our needs."

"I give up some of my needs to satisfy you and you give up some of your needs to satisfy me."

"We discover new and creative ways to satisfy both of our very important needs."

Different Behaviours in Conflict Handling

	High	*Competition*			*Co-Operation*	

Concern for Self (vertical axis: Low → High)
Concern for Relationship (horizontal axis: Low → High)

- High: *Competition* (top left), *Co-Operation* (top right)
- *Compromise* (center)
- Low: *Avoidance* (bottom left), *Giving in* (bottom right)
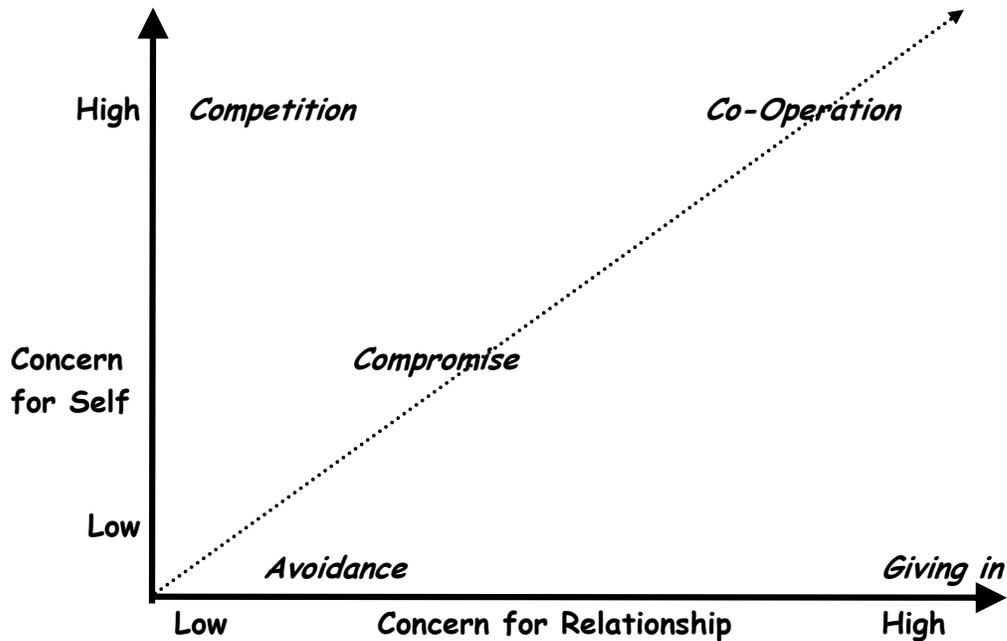
Avoidance	→	**Lose & Lose**

"Neither you nor I satisfy our needs."

Party A does not value either his/her own or Party B's interests and needs very highly, and/or denies that there is a conflict.

Giving in / Accommodate	→	**Lose & Win**

"I satisfy your needs at my expense."

Party A does not value his/her own ideas and interests very highly, but places a high value on those of Party B (or the common goal).

Competition	→	**Win & Lose**

"I satisfy my needs at your expense."

Party A places a very high value on his/her own opinions and desires, and very little on those of Party B

Compromise	→	**½ Win & ½ Win**

"I give up some of my needs to satisfy you, and you give up some of your needs to satisfy me."

The basic premise is that the parties differences can not be reconciled and must therefore be traded off

Co-operation	→	**Win & Win**

"We discover new, creative (and some-times even healing) ways to satisfy of our very important needs

Full value is placed on both parties' interests, views and desires. Both parties appreciate each *both* and strive for consensus, i.e. agreement on the chosen course of action. In this way both parties feel satisfied, because their needs are met and the relationship is strengthened.

Some useful Definitions

Conflict
An issue between two or more parties who have (or think they have) incompatible goals or ideas. Conflicts may involve deep-rooted moral or value differences, high-stakes distributional questions, or can be about who dominates whom.

Dispute
Short-term disagreements that are visible on the surface and relatively easy to resolve, because they involve interests that are negotiable. Disputes often exist within a larger, longer and more deep-rooted conflict.

Conflict Prevention
To prevent a conflict from escalating violently or to take action before a violent outbreak of a conflict emerges.

Conflict Settlement
The imposition of a settlement by a third party, for example through a Judge or an Arbitrator

Conflict Management
To regulate a conflict and to reduce its negative effects

Conflict Resolution
To address the underlying issues of a conflict and to focus on the relationship and communication between the parties

Conflict Transformation
To overcome the root and structural causes of conflict and to strengthen conflict solving capacities in individuals, communities and society

Burning and Frozen Conflicts

It's hardly possible to constructively work towards the resolution of a conflict, when conflicting parties are either screaming at each other or not talking at all. In the first case, the conflict is too "hot" and in the second to "cold".

Examples:

Hot → *Two school boys hitting and kicking each other in the schoolyard.*
Cold → *A couple that is married for a long time. Both partners avoid talking about possibly conflicting issues to not threaten the relationship. The effect is that the relationship becomes more and more superficial.*

Hot → Proper temperature to work on a conflict ← Cold
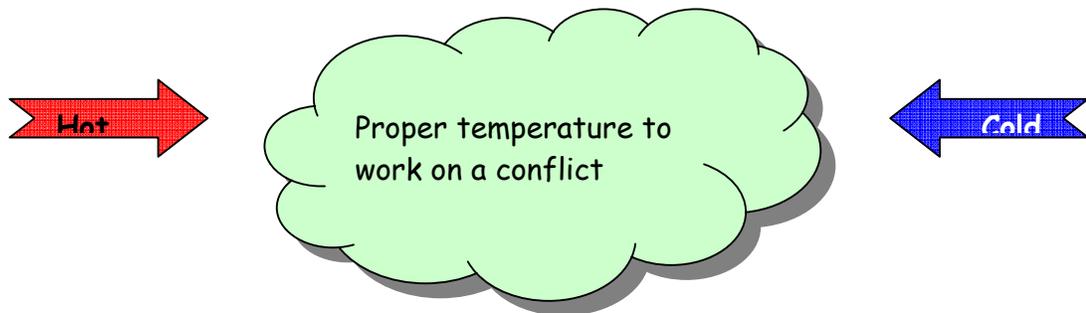
Characteristics

Burning		Frozen
Enthusiasm / Over-Motivation	←→	No belief in constructiveness / Frustration, Sarcasm, Depression
Parties warming up on achieving their goals	←→	Parties hold down each others enthusiasm
Block criticism to own motives	←→	Little awareness for consequences
Convincing others and winning followers, throwing rules and procedures overboard	←→	Retreating attitude: avoiding touch or contact, dodging, evading, slowing down, blocking, hindering
Confrontation: Parties seek friction and want to meet	←→	Avoidance, everybody is minimizing possible contact, atomizing
Unlimited belief in own supremacy and superiority	←→	Fear loss of self-confidence, doubting self-worth

Possible Interventions

Burning		Frozen
Cool down!	←→	Heat up!
Distance, retarding	←→	Nearness, commitment
Limiting	←→	Relaxing / Open up
Set up rules on how to fight / communicate	←→	Reduce the hardenings in the procedures
Interim-agreements to control behaviour	←→	Stimulate and encourage to voice inner motions
Agreements to channel energies and behaviour	←→	Create safe places for constructive encounters
Third Party: Accepted authority for the rules	←→	Third Party: creates a safe environment / atmosphere
	←→	
--------------------------		--------------------------
	←→	
--------------------------		--------------------------
	←→	
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Escalation of Conflict – Nine Stages

We, as human-beings have a special relationship to the law of gravity. When something seems difficult we feel heavy and it literally pulls us to the ground.

The uninterrupted escalation of a conflict can pull us down as into quicksand, and if there is no turning point, we will end up in the abyss.

Nine Stages of Escalation

1
2
3
Win – Win
4
5
6
Win – Lose
7
8
9
Lose – Lose
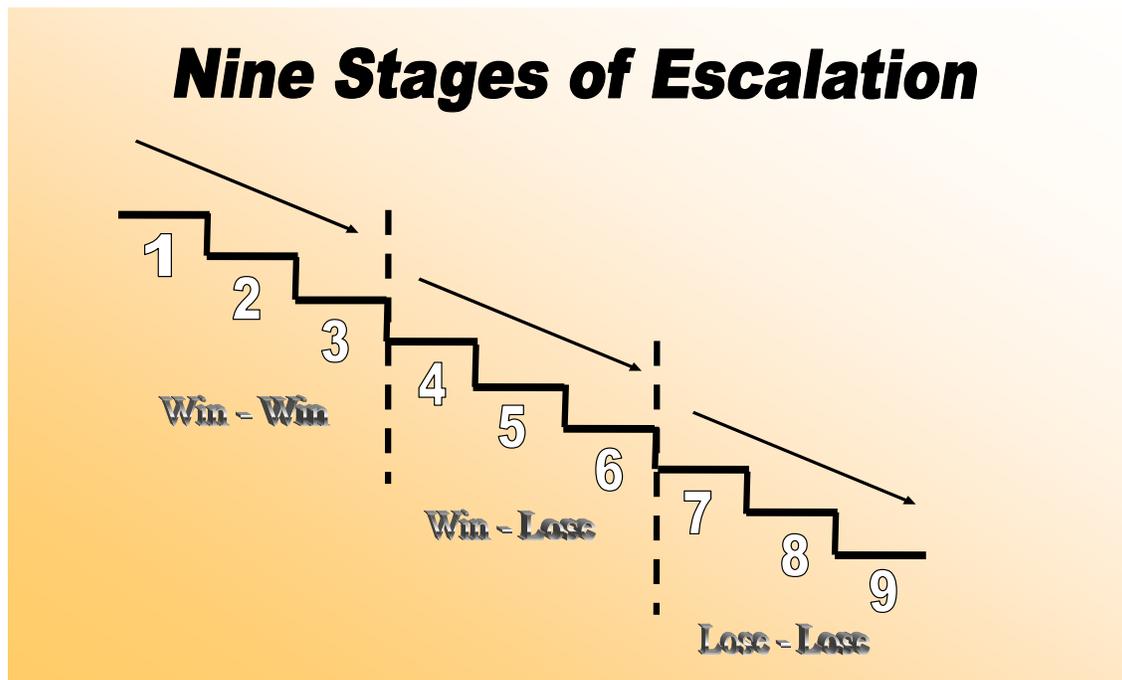
At every stage, the dynamic of a conflict can escalate further when there is no conscious caucusing or moment of awareness and reflection.

Once you recognize the characteristics of the different stages of a conflict, you are able to act: You can either prevent the conflict from escalating even further or you can consciously let the conflict escalate further. Sometimes the latter is useful to make a conflict more visible to stakeholders and the social environment.

Once you have identified the stage a conflict is in, you can use this opportunity to find constructive solutions on your own, or you see that it is necessary to ask an outsider for assistance in finding a solution. Sometimes problems are just too big to be dealt with alone.

Always ask yourself:

"Do I have a problem or does the problem have me?"

The Nine Stages of Conflict Escalation were developed in the 1980s by Austrian Professor Friedrich Glasl and in detail described in his book:

*"Conflict Management - A Handbook for Executives and Counsellors",*

*Germany, 2002*   → *Summary: Page 27*

Nine Stages of Escalation and Thresholds - Overview

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Hardening of positions	**Debates and Polemics**	**No more words but action**	**Images & group building**	**Loss of face**	**Strategy of threatening**	**Limited destruction**	**Fragmentation**	**Together into the abyss**
Tensions and clashes	Polarisation in feeling, thinking and acting	Loss of empathy	Coalition	Unmasking the other, direct and public attacks,	Spiral of threats and counter-threats	Cynicism Human beings are becoming things	Paralyse and disintegrate the hostile systems Complete destruction:	Final / total confrontation No way back Destruction is out of control
Cooperation is bigger than rivalry	Willing to dominate Positions without bridges	Rivalry is bigger than cooperation	Self-fulfilling prophecies Remarkable prejudices	Good vs. Evil Noble vs. diabolic Disgust and banning	Ultimatum, Sanctions and potentials of sanctions Acceleration	Morals are becoming upside down Purpose is sanctifying extreme interventions	Physical, mental spiritual, social and economical	Policy of scorched earth Negating of human existence

Opponent's Expectations:								
win – win			**win - lose**			**lose - lose**		

Strategies for (third-party) interventions:

--------- *Negotiation* ---------

----------*Facilitation, by chair person* ---------

--------- *Process consultation by neutral third party* ----------

------------------------------------- *Mediation* -------------------------------------

-------------------- *Arbitration / Adjudication* --------------------

---------------- *Power Intervention* ----------------

# Nine Stages of Conflict Escalation - Pictures
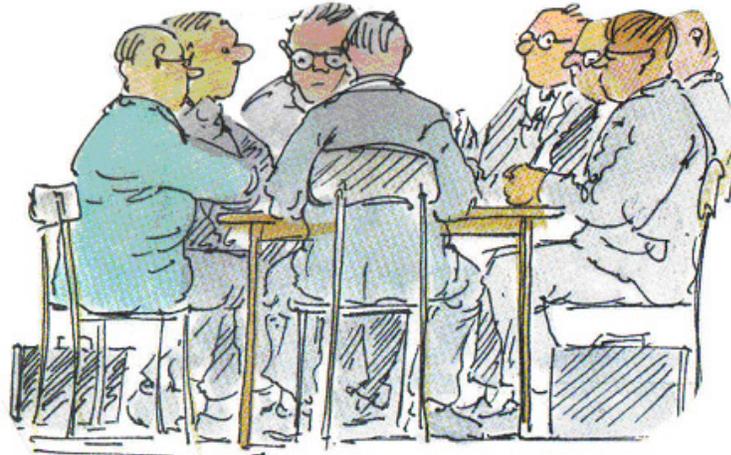
Hardening →
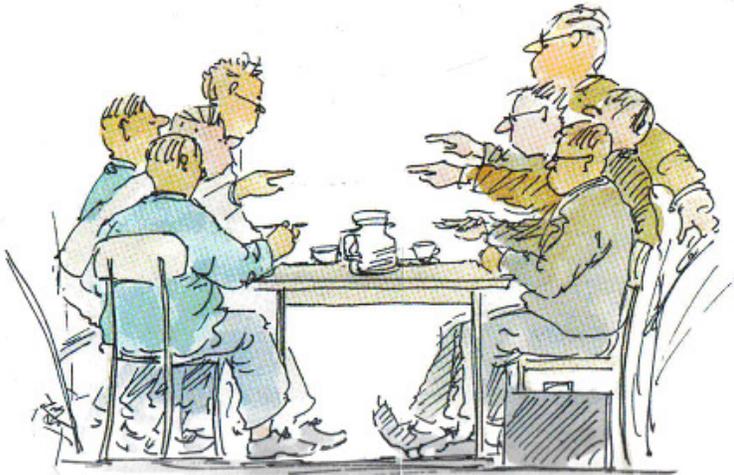
← Debate / Polemics

Actions not Words →
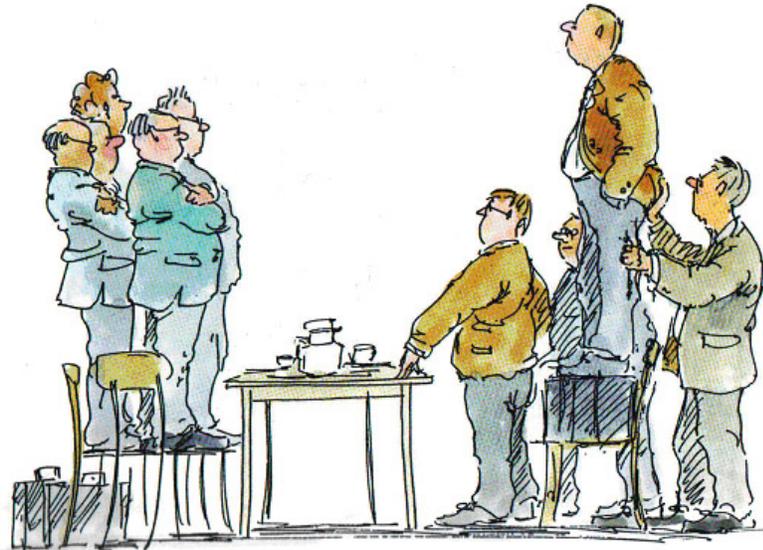
Images / Coalitions →
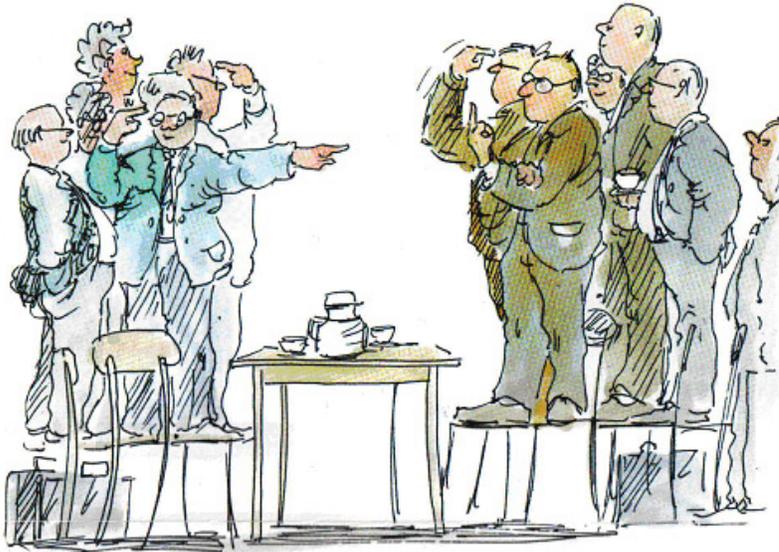
← *Loss of Face*
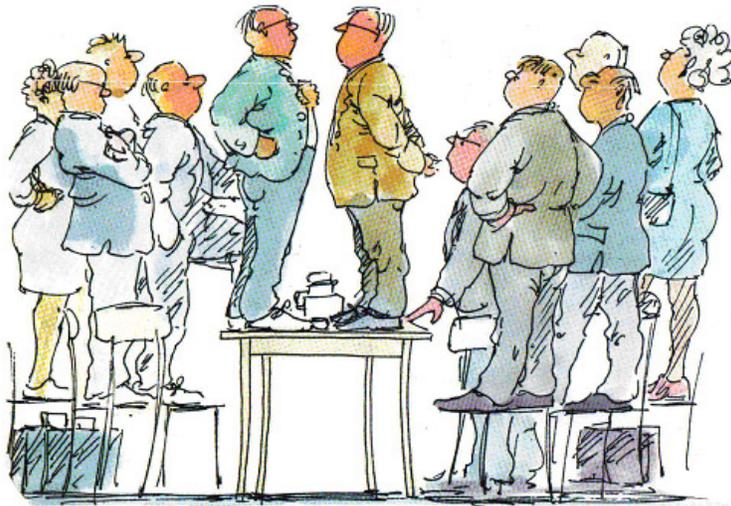
Strategies of Threats →
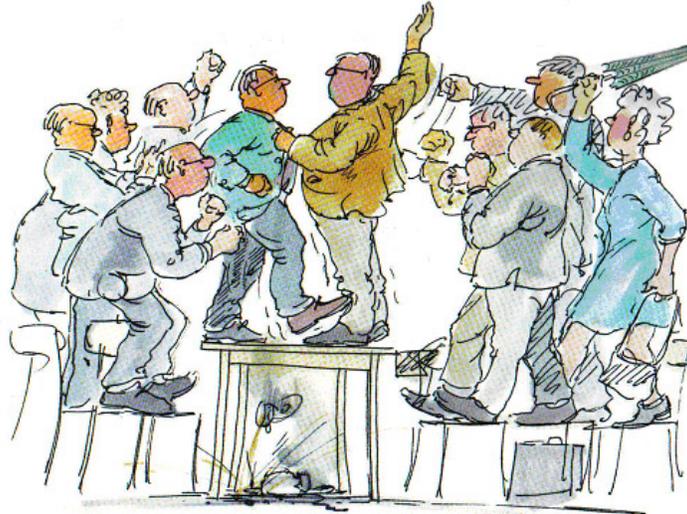
Limited destructive blows→

← Fragmentation
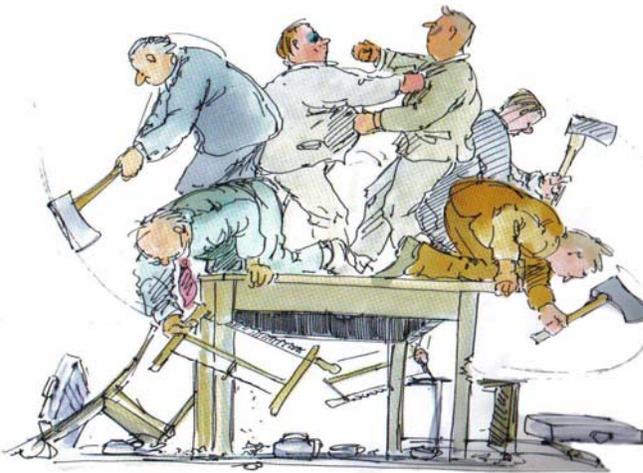
Together into Abyss →

Illustrations by B. Pfeifroth,
Institute for Peace Education Tuebingen / Germany, 1999

Conflict Intervention Strategies

Parties meet (usually without the help of 3rd party) to resolve differences

1) Negotiation

Neutral or professional 3rd party helps to improve communication between parties, usually in a meeting

2) Facilitation

3rd party acts as "go-between" for parties to meet and resolve differences or disputes

3) Conciliation

Neutral 3rd party helps parties to resolve differences themselves, improving relationship between parties

4) Mediation

Neutral 3rd party hears both points of view and then imposes a decision

5) Arbitration

Judge/magistrate imposes decision after hearing legal argument from both sides according to complex legal procedures

6) Adjudication / Litigation

Power or violence is used in a dominant manner to impose a decision or to force a 'solution'

7) Force

Dealing with Emotions & Anger

In every conflict between human beings, our emotions play a critic role, either consciously or unconsciously. Especially anger can be very disturbing, as it can hinder us to enter dialogue and eventually resolve the conflict that we are having.

Any **conflict** can be compared to an iceberg…
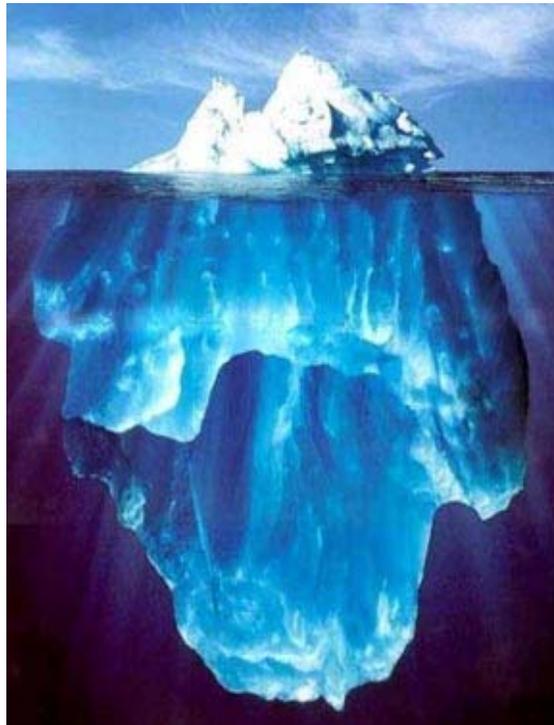
- Picture of an Iceberg in the Polar Sea -

….nearly 90% lies invisibly under the surface.

In most cases it is our behaviour and our statements and positions that are **visible** to all the others.

Invisible aspects of a conflict are the parties' individual or collective backgrounds, attitudes, expectations, dreams, wishes, hurts, fears, needs, feelings, emotions, hidden plans and strategies.

The following texts may help to understand and deal with emotions constructively:

Emotions should not be judged or repressed!

Emotions are a vital part of you as a human being, and they need to be respected accepted and expressed. You can look upon your emotions as your children, who need your attention and respect, <u>and</u> your guidance.

Emotions are your children!

The parallels between 'being emotional' and 'being as a child' are striking, as there is an impressive resemblance between the way you deal with your own emotions and the way you deal with (real) children.

A child is honest and spontaneous in his emotions, and he does not hide or repress them until adults encourage him to do so. The fact that children spontaneously express their emotions does, however, not mean that the child experiences his emotions in a balanced way. Everyone knows that a child can be carried away by his emotions (rage, fear or sadness) and is often unable to put a stop to it. In such a situation, the child can almost drown in his emotions and that makes him unbalanced, i.e. out-of-centre.

An emotion can best be viewed as an energy that comes to you for healing.

Therefore, it is important to not be completely swept away by the emotion, but to remain able to look at it from a neutral stance. It is important to *stay conscious*.

> <u>One might put it like this:</u>
>
> You should not repress an emotion, but you should not drown in it either. For when you drown in it, when you identify with it completely, the child in you becomes a tyrant that will lead you astray!

The most important thing you can do with an emotion is to allow it in, to feel all aspects of it, while not losing your consciousness. Take for instance anger. You can invite anger to be fully present, experiencing it in your body at several places, while you are at the same time neutrally observing it. Such a type of conscious behaviour is healing. What happens in this instance, is that you embrace the emotion, which is essentially a form of *misunderstanding*, with *understanding*.

Dealing with Emotions - Example:

Your daughter has bumped his knee on the table and it really hurts. She is upset, screaming with pain, and she kicks the table for she is angry with it. She considers the table to be the source of her pain.

Emotional guidance at this moment means that the parent first helps the child name her experience. "You are angry, aren't you – you are in pain, right?". Naming it is essential. You transfer the root of the problem from the table to the child herself. It's not in the table, it is you who are hurt, it is you who is angry. And yes, I understand your emotion!

The parent embraces the emotion of the child with understanding, with love. The moment the child feels understood and recognized, her anger will gradually fade away. The physical pain may still be present. But her resistance to the pain, the anger around it, can dissolve. The child reads compassion and understanding in your eyes, and this relaxes and soothes her emotions. The table, the cause of the emotions, is not relevant anymore.

In embracing an emotion with understanding and compassion, you shift the focus of the child's attention from outside to inside, and you teach the child to take responsibility for the emotion. You are showing her that her reaction to an outside trigger is not a given, but that it is a matter of choice. You can choose misunderstanding or understanding. You can choose to fight or to accept. You can choose.


Anger...

...is a response to pain or hurt, and also our muscular system mobilizes.
We feel the anger emotions quite physically, e.g. as a rush of feeling upward and frontward to the head and arms. This is because anger provides a person with the energy for confronting a problem. When that energy is used by the person to think through the problem so that s/he can communicate effectively with the other, it can lead to positive results.
It is important to understand what can happen when anger is not addressed and resolved. There is a limit to the body's ability to sustain the peak energy brought about by anger. If it is too often repeated or too long sustained, anger can exhaust the body and spirit, causing an individual to burn out. If it is unacknowledged or unreconciled, it can turn into depression. If a bout of anger leads to a resolved, the anger has accomplished its purpose and fades into history. If not, it is likely to bury itself in the psyche, where its specific content will be forgotten, but its energy will remain active.

The Conflict-Triangle

Developing our understanding of conflict further from the "Iceberg-Model", one can draw a triangle, where all aspects playing a role in a conflict fit in:

Behaviour → statements, offences, insults, attacks, etc.

visible

I n v i s i b l e

Attitude
→ prejudices, believes, perceptions, feelings

Context
→ political, cultural, economical, historical background
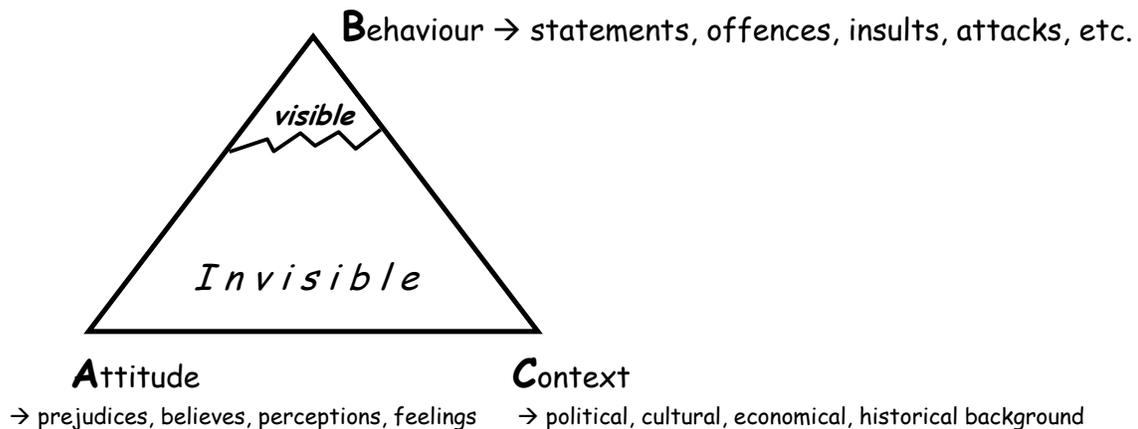
This ABC (Attitude-Behaviour-Context) – Conflict Triangle was first developed by Prof. Johan Galtung and provides an excellent basic concept for the analysis of even very complex conflict situations:

A First, there are the **A**ttitudes (**A**) of the conflicting parties, which tend to become more defensive or even hostile as the conflict escalates. In order to finally reach settlement of the conflict, the parties must first become aware of their attitudes and perceptions towards each other.

B Attitude in conflict situations not only influences one's own **B**ehaviour (**B**), but is very much affected by the Behaviour of others. Insults or provocations make it more difficult to see the mutual benefit of ending a conflict. Therefore it is essential to find ways of tackling the negative behaviour in order to defuse the situation.

C Finally, we need to consider the **C**ontext (**C**) within which the conflict is being waged.
Context is the 'objective' reality to which the conflict relates and the environment in which it takes place. If we ignore the influence of the context, all changes in attitudes and behaviour will be in vain. Various factors in the context can either fuel or block a positive and transformative development of a conflict.

Introduction to Mediation

Three Basic Principles:

1) Conflicting parties are the ones to solve their own conflicts!

    → Mediator helps through the process!

2) Conflicting parties attack problem not persons!

    → Mediator guides to respectful behaviour!

3) Conflicting parties decide on contents and agreement!

    → Mediator provides constructive framework and continuous support!

…and how it can look like:
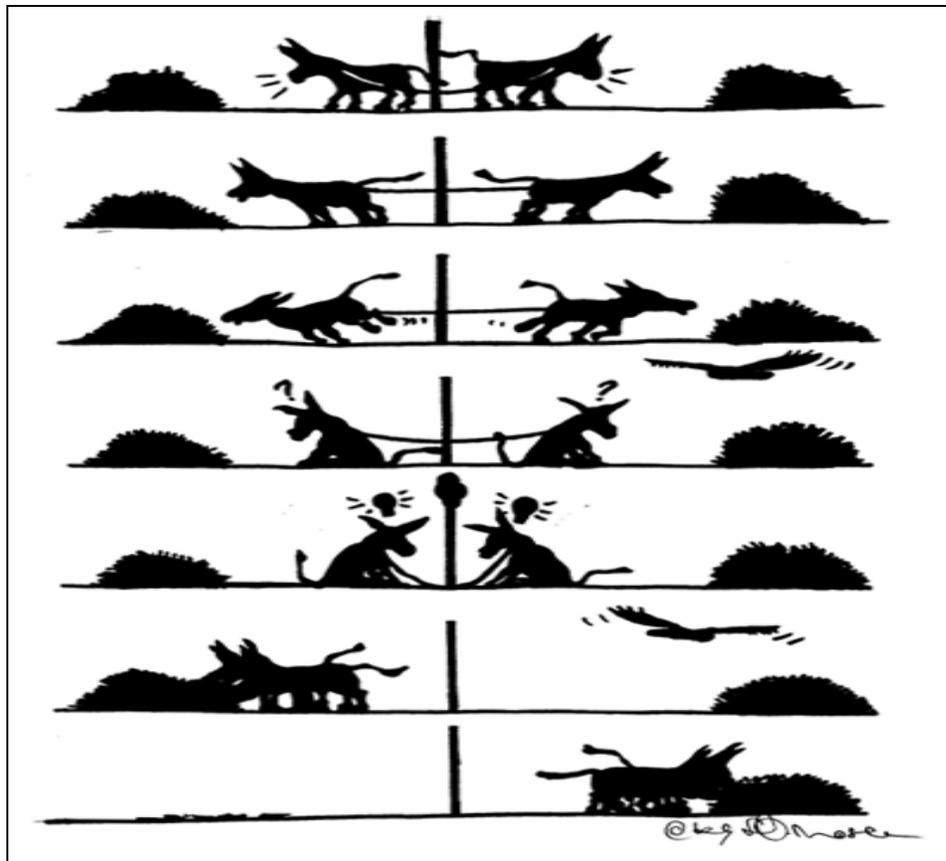
Mediation – Four Phases

Introduction Phase:
In the welcoming and during the introduction, the parties are introduced to one another and the mediation process is explained.
Here the mediators create a friendly and constructive atmosphere. They attune to the parties, clarify ground rules and general regulations, and allow for questions.

<u>**CHARACTERISTICS**</u>　　　　<u>**POSSIBLE QUESTIONS**</u>

Phase I: Defining the conflict	
Identify those directly and those indirectly involved.	What happened?
	What did you experience?
Identify context, e.g. social	Where do you see the problems?
	What is the context of the conflict?

Phase II: Background, Barriers, Emotions	
Description of difficulties	How do you feel?
	Which negative experiences did you have?
Expression of feelings	What did the conflict do to you?
	Which feelings came up?
	Did you have positive experiences?

Phase III: Create Options / Best possible outcome?	
Encourage visions and dreams	What is going to happen now?
	What do you wish for now?
Generate wishes and options	What would be the most suitable solution?
Envision a positive future	What kind of relationship do you envisage for the future?

Phase IV: Agreement Stage	
Work on priorities	What can you do in reality?
Develop course of action	What do you expect from the other?
	What can you put into practice? (realistic)
Envision a positive future	What are you both prepared to do?
	How will you do it and who will do what?

Final Phase: Follow-up & Implementation	
Days, weeks or months later…	How did it work out?
	What was good?
	What improvements are still necessary?

Some Ground Rules for a Mediation Process:

- No offences or insults

- Clarify Issue of Confidentiality

- Parties agree to respect each other

- Treat each others' emotions with respect

- Try to listen (even) without (inner) judgment

- No interruptions when the other party is speaking

- Parties speak only for themselves, if possible using I-messages

- Everybody takes full responsibility of his/her own words & actions!

Ethics for Mediators:

- Respect for individuals and their biography. Consider their own speed of learning and that their individual learning steps will be different from yours. Acknowledge and deal with parties' different cultures, religions, genders, traditions, values, education etc.

- Consciousness of own role in intervention into conflict. What gives me the right or obligation to mediate? Is it an institutional, moral, family, hierarchical, professional, competence etc. position? Did the parties or someone else choose you as mediator?

Checklist:

Before you bring the parties together, have preparatory meetings with the individual parties, where you:

- Explain mediation process
- Explain possible benefits of mediation
- Explore initial unrealistic positions/expectations and sensitive issues

→ **Set date & time for the mediation meeting, and invite conflicting parties, according to the correct legal procedures!**

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is a very important tool you can use, especially as a mediator.

It means to restate what another person has said, in your own words, with emphasis on what is said 'between the lines', This way you can show the other party that you connect, or understand the other person's feelings.

Paraphrasing is a powerful tool:

- ❖ **For showing that you understand the other person or party**

- ❖ **For moving the conversation to deeper levels: Paraphrasing often brings more reflective responses from the other party.**

- ❖ **For slowing down the conversation between parties if needed**

- ❖ **For speeding up the process if needed, by making long and complicated sentences comprehensible for yourself and others**

- ❖ **It can defuse defensive or insulting statements while retaining the facts.**

How to paraphrase:

a) Focus on the speaker:

"<u>You</u> felt…" , "<u>You</u>'re saying…", "<u>You</u> believe…"
<u>NOT:</u>   *"I know exactly how you feel. I've been in situations like that myself."*

b) A paraphrase can have <u>three components</u>:

Restate <u>fact</u>:	"Your wife locked you out of the house."
Reflect <u>feelings</u>:	"(And) you feel discouraged about things getting any better."
Reflect <u>intention</u>:	"(But) you really like to sort things out with her."

c) A paraphrase focuses on what was really said and contains <u>no judgement</u> or evaluation, but <u>describes empathically</u>.

"So you believe very strongly that…"
"You were very unhappy when…"
"You felt quite angry with your neighbour in that situation…"
"The way you see it…"
"If I'm understanding you correctly, you…"

<u>NOT:</u>   *"What you are trying to say, is…"*
<u>There are two critical qualities of an emotion or feeling</u>:

- o   What feeling is it ?
- o   How intense is this feeling ?

d) <u>Act like a mirror not a parrot!</u> *Paraphrase reflects the meaning of the speaker's words but does not merely parrot the speaker, e.g.:*

Speaker:	"I resent it deeply when I found out they had gone behind my back to the boss. Why can't they come and talk with me, and give me a chance to sort things out with them?"
Paraphrase:	"You were quite hurt that they didn't come directly to you to resolve things."

<u>NOT:</u>   *"You resented it deeply that they went behind your back to the boss. You wish they had given you a chance to sort things out with them."*

e) A paraphrase should always be <u>shorter than the speaker's own statement</u>!

Additional Material & Exercises

Nine Escalation Stages – A Summary

… by Thomas Jordan

The nine stages escalation model is a very useful diagnostic tool for the conflict facilitator, but also valuable as a means for sensitizing people to the mechanisms of conflict escalation. Such sensitizing may lead to a greater awareness of the steps one should take care to avoid if one wants to prevent a conflict from escalating out of control. In a more academic perspective, the model also provides a theory of conflict escalation that emphasizes the situational pressures acting upon people involved in a conflict.

Rather than seeking causes in the individuals, the model emphasizes how there is an internal logic to conflict relationships, stemming from the failure of "benign" ways of handling contradictory interests and standpoints. Conscious efforts are needed in order to resist the escalation mechanisms, which are seen as having a momentum of their own.

Stage 1: Hardening
The first stage of conflict escalation develops when a difference over some issue or frustration in a relationship proves resilient to resolution efforts. The problem remains, and leads to irritation. Repeated efforts to overcome the difficulties fail, which means that the natural flow of shifting concerns is blocked. The parties are repeatedly reminded that in a particular field, they are not getting forward. Interests and opinions crystallize into standpoints, i.e. fixed positions on how a certain issue ought to be handled. These standpoints tend to become mutually incompatible in the perception of the conflict parties.
The standpoints attract adherents, and groups start to form around certain positions, or for and against a certain standpoint. In the next stage these groups are increasingly consolidated into more and more well delimited parties. Boundaries defining who belongs to the inside and the outside become more and more visible. The members of a party develop a shared interpretation of the situation, creating a common selective filter affecting the perception of all relevant information. Members of one party readily pick up negative information about the other party. These pieces of information are given great significance, whereas positive information is not registered. Differences between the parties appear more significant than similarities.
The frustrated efforts to overcome the differences lead to development of habitual behavioural patterns for acting in strained situations. When no progress is made, the parties become increasingly aware of the mutual dependencies they cannot evade. Interactions with the other side are disappointing, and are perceived as a waste of time

and energy. Even though the other party is perceived as stubborn and unreasonable, the persons involved are still committed to try to resolve the differences. However, as the efforts prove fruitless, the parties start to doubt that the counterpart sincerely wants to solve the problems. They may also start suspecting that some ulterior motives may be involved.

The communication between the parties is still based on mutuality: the basic status of the involved persons as responsible human beings is recognized, and one tries to be fair in the interactions.

The *threshold* to stage 2 is taken when one or both parties lose(-s) faith in the possibility of solving the problems through straight and fair discussions. When straight argumentation is abandoned in favour of tactical and manipulative argumentative tricks, the conflict slips into stage 2.

Stage 2: Debates and Polemics

Since the counterpart doesn't seem amenable to sensible arguments, discussions tend to develop into verbal confrontations. The parties look for more forceful ways of pushing through their standpoints. In order to gain strength, they tend to become increasingly locked into inflexible standpoints. The dispute is no longer restricted only to a well-defined issue, but the parties start to feel that their general position is at stake. This means that they divert more and more attention to how they appear: being successful, strong and skilful rather than compliant, insecure and incompetent. Debates are no longer only focussed on which standpoint has more merits, but also on who is most successful in promoting the standpoints, and how the outcomes of the debates affect one's reputation. Accumulating tactical advantages over the counterpart becomes an important concern.

When rational and issue-relevant arguments don't suffice to ensure success, the parties resort to "quasi-rational" argumentation, such as:

- Bickering about the underlying causes of the present problems, in order to avoid blame;
- Strong exaggeration of the implications and consequences of the counterpart's position, in order to present it as absurd;
- Suggestive comments about the relation of the central issue with other concerns, linking the issue to larger value considerations;
- Reference to recognized authorities or tradition in order to gain legitimacy for a standpoint;
- Stating the alternatives as extremes, in order to get the opponent to accept a "reasonable compromise.".

These tactical tricks aim at keeping the counterpart off balance emotionally or at gaining the upper hand in a skirmish. The centre of gravity of the verbal interactions therefore shift from rational arguments towards emotions and relative power issues. The parties can no longer assume that words mean what they seem to mean, but have to look for veiled meanings and consequences. This introduces a strong propensity of mistrust in the relationships. The parties expect each other to try to gain advantages

at the other's expense. To the extent that one party succeeds in gaining such advantages, the other is increasingly vexed, and starts looking for ways of compensating for them. Every statement and action gets additional significance, namely in terms of how they affect the reputation and relative position of the actor. It is risky to do something that might look like yielding or weakness, therefore neither side shies away from hard confrontations. Discussions turn into debates, where inflexible standpoints collide with each other. However, at stage 2 the parties are still partly committed to common goals and interests, and tend to vacillate between cooperation and competition. The growing mistrust creates a sense of insecurity and loss of control. The parties try to compensate for this by an increased emphasis on a self-image as righteous and strong. Aggressive actions serve at this stage mostly to boost self-esteem, and to make an impression on the counterpart. Sincere efforts to control the counterpart belong to later escalation stages.

The frustrating experiences lead to the build-up of tensions, which are often discharged in outbursts. Such acts serve as valves for letting out pressure, but do not involve any real problem-solving. Repeated experiences of the counterpart lead to the formation of images of *typical behaviour patterns*. However, these images are not yet as global and as stereotypical as the enemy images of stage 4.

The *threshold* to stage 3 is related to the basic right of each party to be heard in matters of mutual interest. When one party feels that further talking is useless, and start acting without consulting the other side, the conflict slips into stage 3.

Stage 3: Actions, Not Words
At stage 3, the parties no longer believe that further talk will resolve anything, and they shift their attention to actions. Common interests and the prospect of resuming cooperation recede into the background, and the parties see each other as competitors. The sense of being blocked by the counterpart is paramount, and the dependencies linking oneself to the other part are felt as extremely vexing. The antagonists therefore seek to replace the mutual dependencies with unilateral dependency, in order to be able to dominate the counterpart. The most important goal at this stage is to block the counterpart from reaching his goal, and to push through one's own interests. By unilateral action, the parties hope to force the counterpart to yield, but they would themselves under no circumstances want to be seen yielding for the pressure from the counterpart. Since one can no longer trust what is stated verbally, action and non-verbal communication dominate the course of events. This tends to speed up the escalation process.

Within each party the pressure to conform to a common attitude and a common interpretation increases. Images, attitudes and interpretations tend to be reduced to the simplest common denominator, which leads to a far-reaching loss of differentiation. The feeling of unity and shared predicament is strong, further reducing the capacity to relate to the concerns and perspective of the other side. Since verbal communication is reduced and untrustworthy, there are few opportunities to get genuine feed-back on the stereotypical images and interpretations the parties make up about each other's patterns of behaviour and presumed intentions. Fantasies about possible motives and hidden strategies can develop unchecked.

The feeling of being blocked is further increased by the limited possibility genuine verbal communication. The parties start to see themselves as being held captives by external circumstances they cannot control. They therefore tend to deny responsibility for the course of events. An increasing part of their own actions are regarded as necessary responses to the behaviour of the other side.

The *threshold* to stage 4 is veiled attacks on the counterpart's social reputation, general attitude, position and relationship to others. "Deniable punishment behaviour" (see below) is a characteristic sign of slipping into stage 4.

Stage 4: Images and Coalitions

At stage 4 the conflict is no longer about concrete issues, but about victory or defeat. Defending one's reputation is a major concern.

The "typicals" that evolved at stage 2 and 3 are now consolidated and complemented into full-blown general and consistent images of the counterpart. These images are stereotypical, highly fixed and are very resilient to change through new information. Such images serve an important role in providing a sense of orientation: one has the feeling of knowing what to expect from the environment. Conflict parties start to attribute collective characteristics both to members of the other side and to in-group members. Individuals are perceived to have certain characteristics (such as unreliability, incompetence, bossiness, etc.) only by virtue of belonging to a specific group.

The negative other-image comprises prejudices and attributions of motives and intentions, but does not yet, as in stage 5, deny the basic moral integrity of the counterpart as someone deserving to be treated justly (see below). The negative images are now screens that occupy the field of vision whenever the parties meet each other. These screens prevent the parties from seeing each other's true complexity and individuality. No side accepts the image presented of them by the other side. The other side's image is vehemently rejected, but at the same time each party tries to get the other side to recognize their own other-image.

A salient symptom of stage 4 dynamics is the difficulty of the parties to mention positive qualities of the counterpart when asked by a facilitator. The other side is thought of as uneducable: "Such people are unable to change."

The power of the stereotypes also leads to a subtle pressure on each party to conform to roles assigned to them. It can be very difficult to escape such behaviour expectations. Both parties now feel that their behaviour is a reaction to the counterpart's actions and intentions, and don't feel responsible for the further escalation of the conflict.

The interactions are permeated with efforts to find gaps in the behavioural norms in order to inflict harm on the counterpart. The rules are adhered to formally, but any opportunity to get away with unfriendly acts are used. A typical form of interactions at this stage is "deniable punishment behaviour." The counterpart is provoked, insulted and criticized, but in forms that do not formally infringe on the etiquette. Blows can be dealt through insinuations, ambiguous comments, irony and body language, but the perpetrator can flatly deny that any harm was intended, if challenged. However, since the other party can not respond by openly discussing the incident, retaliatory action is

very likely to ensue. The veiled nature of the attacks prevents a dramatic public loss of face (see stage 5).

In this stage, the parties actively try to enlist support from bystanders. Actions to enhance one's image in the eyes of others are planned and implemented. The parties also consciously seek to stage their confrontations in public, in order to recruit supporters. The conflict activities are now focussed on affecting the counterpart and gaining the upper hand in the power struggle, rather than achieving issue-related results. Attacks are made on the identity, attitude, behaviour, position and relationships of the counterpart. The causes of the conflict are no longer seen in terms of incompatible standpoints, but as rooted in the very character of the counterpart.

The *threshold* to stage 5 is constituted by acts that lead to a public loss of face for one or both parties. If the basic honour of someone is offended repeatedly and de-liberately, in particular in a public setting, the conflict is highly likely to slip into stage5.

Stage 5: Loss of Face

The transition to stage 5 is particularly dramatic. The word "face" signifies here the basic status a person has in a community of people. As long as a person is regarded as a respectable citizen, he or she has an intact "face," and is entitled to fair treatment and respect. The "face" is reproduced by the members of a group, by their avoiding any overt actions that challenge the basic status a person has. The "face" is hurt by public events, not by private gossip or individual opinions. Loss of face means that the conflict parties feel that they have suddenly seen through the mask of the other party, and discovered an immoral, insane or criminal inside. The transformation of the image one party hold of the other is radical. It is not an expansion of the old biased image, but is felt as a sudden insight into the true, and very different, nature of the other. The whole conflict history is now reinterpreted: one feels that the other side has followed a consequent and immoral strategy from the very beginning. All their "constructive" moves were only deceptive covers for their real intentions. There is no longer ambiguity, but everything appears clear.

The images and positions the parties hold are no longer regarded in terms of superiority and inferiority, but in terms of angels and devils. One's own side is a representative of the good forces in the world, whereas the other side represents the destructive, subhuman, and bestial forces. The counterpart is no longer only annoying, but an incarnation of moral corruption. A palpable sign of this stage is when a party feels bodily nauseated in the presence of the other. In stage 4, the image of the counterpart was built up of elements depicting the incompetence and the irritating behaviours of the other.

In stage 5 the image of the counterpart centres on the moral inferiority attributed to the other. The conflict is no longer about concrete issues, but about the prevalence or not of holy values.

The transformation of the image of the other side drastically increases the role of negative expectations and suspiciousness. All seemingly constructive moves of the counterpart are dismissed as deceptions, while one single negative incident is conclusive proof of the true nature of the other. This leads to a situation where it is extremely difficult to build mutual confidence. The gestures needed for establishing minimal trust

in the sincerity of the other side become extreme, and are often felt to be humiliating. For example, in order to prove a sincere constructive intention, one side might be asked to make a public apology for past statements. However, the parties often fear that such concessions would be interpreted as weakness or culpability, and that they would further damage one's public status. In this deadlock, denigrating the other side may be the only visible option for gaining a moral upper hand.

Incidents leading to loss of face are usually followed by dedicated attempts by the parties to rehabilitate their public reputation of integrity and moral credibility. Such efforts may now dominate the conflict process. Loss of face, and ensuing retaliatory acts often isolate the conflict parties from bystanders. This may further exacerbate the escalation mechanisms, because the opportunities for getting tempering feedback about the conflict are reduced.

The *threshold* to stage 6 is felt to be less dramatic than to stage 5. When the parties start to issue ultimatum and strategic threats, the conflict enters stage 6.

Stage 6: Strategies of Threats

Since no other way seems to be open, the conflict parties resort to threats of damaging actions, in order to force the counterpart in the desired direction. The strategic threats of stage 6 are very different from the deniable punishment actions characteristic of stage 4. The latter mainly serve the function of giving vent to pent-up frustrations. Strategic threats are actively used in order to force the counterpart to certain concessions.

There are three phases in the increase of issuing strategic threats:

- o The parties issue mutual threats in order to show that they will not retreat. The threatening party wants: (a) to draw attention to themselves and their demands; (b) to demonstrate autonomy and ability to form the agenda; and (c) to get the counterpart to conform with a specific demand or norm by issuing a threat of sanctions.
- o In the next phase the threats are made more concrete, unequivocal and firm. The parties make dedicated statements of self-commitment from which they cannot retreat without losing credibility, in order to enhance the seriousness of their threats.
- o In the third phase, the threats are formulated as ultimatum, where the counterpart is forced to an either-or decision.

One consequence of this dynamic is that the parties increasingly lose control over the course of events. By their own actions they create a pressure to act rapidly and radically.

The perception of the situation becomes increasingly out of touch with reality. The threatening party sees only its own demands, and regards the threat as a necessary deterrence in order to block the counterpart from using violence. One expects the other party to yield to the pressure. The threatened party, however, sees the damaging consequences if the threat becomes reality, and rallies to issue a counter-threat. Feelings of being powerless lead to fear and possibly uncontrollable rage.

In this phase, the conflict becomes increasingly complex, difficult to grasp, and impossible to control. By their actions, the parties introduce time pressure on each other's actions, and thereby curtail their possibilities to weigh the consequences of alternative courses of action in a turbulent and chaotic environment. In order to retain some measure of control, each party insists that its own issues and standpoints must be dealt with in exactly the form they have chosen to present them.

The behaviour is to an increasing extent prone to be ruled by panicky impulses. Any action that seems to promise a powerful effect is attractive. In this stage, taking one's grievances to the media is a common occurrence.

Any threat strategy relies on credibility in order to be successful. Parties issuing threats must therefore try to convince the other party and bystanders that the threat is real and serious. In order to enhance the credibility of a threat, one may act so as to bind oneself publicly to execute the threats if the other party does not yield. Public declarations, or smaller doses of aggressive acts may be used to prop up the credibility of a threat. The other party regards this as proof of the aggressive intentions and capabilities of the counterpart, and seeks countermeasures. By binding themselves to threat strategies, the parties heavily restrict their own freedom of choosing alternative courses of action.

A serious risk in stage 6 is that stress, uncontrollable aggressive actions, and increasing turbulence and complexity lead to disintegration of the parties into smaller units acting autonomously. When this happens, not even binding agreements between the main actors may stop the destructiveness.

The *threshold* to stage 7 is the fear of the consequences that might ensue if the threats are carried out. When the parties actively seek to harm the other side's sanction potential, the conflict transforms to stage 7. Threat strategies only work as long as the parties believe that a threat may act deterring. However, the very internal dynamics of stage 6 drive the parties to translate the threats into action.

Stage 7: Limited Destructive Blows

The threats of stage 6 undermine the basic sense of security of the parties. Now they expect the counterpart to be capable of very destructive acts. Securing one's own further survival becomes an essential concern. It is no longer possible to see a solution that includes the counterpart. The counterpart is regarded as an impediment that must be eliminated by targeted attacks aiming to maim the other. The counterpart is now a pure enemy, and has no longer human qualities. No human dignity stands in the way of the attacks, the enemy is just an object standing in the way. This may go as far as using words like "eliminate" and "exterminate" when discussing what to do.

The attacks target the sanctions potential of the enemy, such as destroying or undermining the counterpart's financial resources, juridical status or control functions. Fear and stress lead to forceful attacks, which are seen as extreme, or at least heavily exaggerated, by the counterpart. The attacks lead to retaliations, often even more destructive. In the frustrated situation, attacks may generate feelings of being powerful and in control, thus giving secondary benefits that reinforce further escalation. The calculation of consequences becomes increasingly skewed: the losses of the counterpart are counted as gains, even though they don't give any benefits

whatsoever in terms of one's own interests and needs. The parties may be prepared to suffer losses, if only there are prospects that the enemy will suffer even larger losses. Malice may become a powerful motive.

The objectives now revolve around neutralising the firepower of the counterpart, and thereby secure one's own survival. Superiority is sought in order to ensure ability to block the counterpart in a longer-term perspective.

There is no longer any real communication. At stage 6 the threat strategies build upon at least a minimum of communication: one must know if the counterpart rejects or accept an ultimatum. In stage 7 each party is only concerned with expressing their own message, and they don't care about how it is received, or what the response might be. Threats followed by immediate interruption of communication is a sign of stage 7 dynamics.

At this stage ethical norms are subsumed under more pressing concerns. At earlier stages the parties exploited gaps in the norms, now they are cast aside if they are bothersome. This is war, and normal rules do not apply. The parties see that it is no longer possible to win. It is a lose-lose struggle. Survival and less damage than the counterpart suffers are the main goals. The *threshold* to stage 8 is attacks that are directly aimed at the core of the counterpart, attacks that are intended to shatter the enemy or destroy his vital systems.

Stage 8: Fragmentation of the Enemy
At this stage the attacks intensify and aim at destroying the vital systems and the basis of power of the adversary. One may specifically aim at fragmenting the counterpart into ineffectual splinters, and at the ability of the counterpart to make decisions. Negotiators, representatives and leaders may be targeted, in order to destroy their legitimacy and power in their own camp. The system that keeps the counterpart coherent is attacked, hoping that the very identity of the other side will crumble so that it falls apart through its own internal contradictions and inherent centrifugal forces.

When a party is attacked in a way that threatens to shatter it, it is forced to make strong efforts to suppress internal conflicts. This increases the stress and the internal pressure within the parties, and leads to an even stronger pressure to undertake further attacks on the other side. The parties fall apart into factions that fight each other, making the situation completely uncontrollable. The attacks on the counterpart target all signs of vitality. The main objective is now to destroy the existence basis of the adversary. The only restraining factor is the concern for one's own survival.

The threshold to stage 9 is reached when the self-preservation drive is given up. When this happens, there is no check at all on further destructiveness.

Stage 9: Together Into the Abyss
In the last stage of conflict escalation, the drive to annihilate the enemy is so strong that even the self-preservation instinct is neglected. Not even one's own survival counts, the enemy shall be exterminated even at the price of destruction of one's own very

existence as an organization, group, or individual. Ruin, bankruptcy, prison sentences, physical harm, nothing matters any longer.

All bridges are burnt, there is no return. A total war of destruction without scruples and remorse is waged. There are no innocent victims, no neutral parties. The only remaining concern in the race towards the abyss is to make sure that the enemy will fall too.

R e d   F l a g s

<u>*Cultural Background:*</u>

In South-Western Europe (Spain, Portugal and Southern France), red flags are used by matadors in traditional bull fights for teasing the bull, so that he becomes more angry and attacks the matador. This gives him a reason to eventually kill the bull with a spear or a sword under applause of a huge audience. Before the bull is pushed into the arena, he is cut with knives and pierced with dozens of darts or small spears, so that he feels pain and his level of fear and aggression rises.

What, in the behaviour of others, makes you...

… impatient ?

… angry ?

… furious ?

… feel intimidated ?

… frightens you ?

… happy ?

Personal Log

Name: ………………………………………………   *Day/Date:* ……………………………

Highlights of the day?

Strengths & weaknesses of today's workshop?

What did I discover and experience, in relation to
   a) my personal development ?

   b) my social surrounding (family/friends)?

   c) my professional life?

What was interesting & where do I want gain more knowledge and experience?

With what and/or with whom did I have difficulties?

Where is it up to me, to initiate change in that regard?

What can and will I do to actually make a change?

What is my vision for the next day?

Observing the Process - Guidelines

Process Observation

Content

Was the topic clear and under-standable for everybody?

Was there a red line …

Were there any detours?

Is the workshop focussing on the issue?

Are there objectives?

Are there ideas?

Orientation on matter of facts?

Factually orientated discussions?

Interaction

How do the participants act?

How do they react?

Gestures, Mimics, Attitudes?

Positive and / or negative actions and / or reactions?

Are there Interruptions?

S. o. attacking or defending?

S.o. dominating or retreating?

S.o. balancing or mediating?

S.o. irritating, provoking, blaming or hurting others?

S.o. helping, assisting or taking sides?

S.o. justifying?

S.o. needs to be acknowledged or

Process

How is the process running?
Big Steps forward or backward?
Barriers and blockades?
How many are participating in the process?
What might be the reasons for those who are not participating, to withdraw their attention?
What is the beginning and the

end of the process?

Highlights & moments of low energy?
Results?
Agreements?